

Parent Governor Elections Guidance

Parent governors have to be elected by parents/carers of children on roll at the school.

In Manchester, the responsibility for parent governor elections in community schools, community special schools, maintained nursery schools and voluntary controlled schools has been delegated to headteachers. The governing body of voluntary aided schools, foundation schools or foundation special schools are legally responsible for organising elections. The responsible body determines who will act as the returning officer to oversee the election.

Who is Eligible to be Nominated

Any parent/carer of a child on roll at the school at the time of the elections is eligible to stand for election as a parent governor, provided that they are not disqualified from being a school governor under the relevant regulations.

A person is also disqualified from standing for election (or appointment) as a parent governor if s/he is:

- an elected member of the local education authority
- paid to work at the school for more than 500 hours in any consecutive twelve month period (at the time of the election or appointment)

The term parent is defined by the Education Act 1996 as:

- The natural (biological) parents of the child
- A person who has legally been given parental responsibility for the child
- A person who has care of the child (for example under a care order)

Nominations

A letter explaining the role of the parent governor, eligibility/skills requirements and the election process should be sent together with a nomination form to all parents/carers of children on roll.

The responsibility for deciding the nominations process lies with the headteacher and the governing body. Parents can self-nominate i.e. put themselves up for election, there is no requirement for parents to be nominated or seconded by another parent, although many schools choose to do this. The model letters and nomination forms that we have provided have been based on a proposer model. Schools may edit the model letters and nominations forms as they wish.

Once all nominations are received there are three possible courses of action:

1. If the number of nominations is less or equal to the total number of vacancies then any parents nominated will be automatically appointed to the governing body. A ballot is not required.
2. If there are more nominations than vacancies, appointments must be decided by secret ballot.
3. If there are not enough nominations to fill all vacancies, the governing body must appoint the parent of a child on roll at the school, the parent of a child who has left the school or the parent of a child under or of compulsory school age.

Undertaking a Ballot

All parents/carers eligible to vote should receive a set of ballot papers. Each parent of a child or children on roll at the school is entitled to one vote, regardless of the total number of children attending. For example, if a parent has two children on roll at the school, they may only vote once.

A collection box should be made available in the school (foyer) and parents should also be given the option to vote by post. Provisions can be made to allow parents to vote electronically, however this is not specifically required.

It is suggested that the following information is included with ballot papers:

- the full names of candidates and brief statements in alphabetical order
- the return date for completed ballot papers
- instructions for filling in the ballot paper
- instructions for returning the ballot paper (which should include a postal option)

There should be a system in place to ensure that ballot papers can be returned confidentially and eligibility of voters can be confirmed. A double envelope system is often used. The outside envelope contains the name and signature of the voter, along with the name of their child and class. The inside envelope is left blank and contains the ballot paper.

Counting Ballots and Declaring results

The following is suggested as guidance of how to undertake a count:

1. A collection box should be made available in the school (foyer) and parents should also be given the option to vote by post.
2. As ballots are received in the collection box they should be checked by the returning officer in the presence of at least one witness, to record the vote as being received from an eligible parent. The inner envelope should then be placed in a secure ballot box for counting after the ballot closes.
3. At the closing date, the returning officer should count the votes in front of at least two witnesses. Candidates and governors can also be invited to witness this, but there is no requirement for either to attend. The returning officer is responsible for determining whether a "spoiled" ballot should be included.
4. The candidate with the highest number of votes is declared the winner, and if there is more than one vacancy the candidate with the next highest number of votes will be appointed to each subsequent position. If the vote ends in a tie, the votes should be recounted and then lots drawn.
5. The result of the election should be displayed in a prominent position in the school. The school may also like to notify parents of the outcome via letter.
6. Ballot papers should be retained securely for a period of six months to allow inspection should there be any dispute of the result.

Additional Resources

Proformas and templates to assist with undertaking elections that can be edited to meet specific school requirements are available on the [Schools Hub Website](#)

- Model Nomination Form and Letter
- Elections Model Ballot Paper and Letter